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601

Aaŋ-toyon, husband's grandfather
Uol-toyon, husband's elder brother

Törüöt üs

The main, original clan; genealogical table; origins

Törüt

Clan; forefather; origin; beginning; root; base

Tüüür, Tügür, Tümür

Relative by marriage; matchmaker; groom's man; bride's maid

**Ubai*

Elder male by age; elder male in the family or clan (see *bi*)

Uol

Boy, youth; son (see *oho*)

Uolan

See *uol*; *uolan-jon*, young men

**Urü*

Relative by marriage; relative in general

Following this presentation of the complete list of Yakut terms of relationship, two points remain to be cleared up: first, the function of the Yakut *Je-usa* (mother's clan) as opposed to the *Aga-usa* (father's clan or gens); and second, the inference to be drawn from Yakut classificatory and descriptive terms of relationship. 614 601

The Yakut mother's clan is not connected with a family organisation in which the women have the chief place in the government, or with the mythical race of women of Asia Minor called Amazons. The Yakut man is the real ruler and head of certain social groups. The origin of the term, *Je-usa*, may be explained, as Sieroszewski assumed, by the former existence of polygamy among the Yakut. The children of each wife—and there is no question that the children knew their own mothers—formed a *Je-usa*, but all these groups of mothers with their children were considered to be divisions of the *Aga-usa*, or the father's gens. 595 614 601

Some writers, like Professor Kroeber, have objected to the usual distinctions between classificatory and descriptive relationship systems, but the study of the Yakut terms of relationship leads us to discriminate between classificatory and descriptive terms. Those terms which apply to lineal and collateral relations, consanguinity and affinity in one group, are classificatory terms; on the other hand, terms designating certain particular cases of consanguinity and affinity are descriptive. Classificatory terms are marked in the list by an asterisk. 601

In connection with the statement that the Yakut mother's clan is an integral part of the father's clan, we should like to present some data bearing on earlier matriarchal relations. The Yakut regard them- 614 601

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selves as the offspring of the mythical Omogoi-bai, in spite of the fact that they originate from his daughter, who married a Tatar or a Buryat.

To the end of the eighteenth century, there remained in vogue among the Yakut the custom of concession of wives. Formerly the bridegroom lived permanently in the house of his father-in-law, but in more recent times he lived there only for a definite period.

The *kalym*, or bride-price, replaced the system of marriage by capture. The origin of the *kalym* may be seen in the simulated enmity of the mother-in-law and the son-in-law.

A matriarchal system presupposes looseness of sex relations. The chastity of girls in rich families is not a question of morality but of *kalym*. The *kalym* for a widow or a girl who has had children is low. In the case of a widow, the belief in the right of the deceased husband may limit the number of wooers. A girl with a child, however, is sometimes preferred as a guaranty against barrenness which the Yakut dislike. In Yakut tales, the guest does not ask, "Where shall I sleep?", but, "Where do you put your guests?" and then they are shown to the beds of the girls. This is a form of hospitable hetaerism.

As the ancient Yakut had no written records, we know very little of their former life and particularly of their internal organization. Our information may be summarized in the following.

A household or yard was called *yal;* a group of individuals, who formed a family, as well as each member of the group, was called *kŏrgŏn*. The family consisted of blood relatives as well as of relatives by marriage: sons-in-law, wives (polygamy), adopted children, laborers, and slaves of both sexes. When the Yakut polygamist had several wives, he had several *yals*.

At the head of the family was the *aga*, meaning primarily "elder in age" and then "father." All the people of the household were regarded as and called by him "my children," "my sons or my daughters." Among these were included not only his own children, but also all relatives by blood and marriage, by adoption, by purchase (slaves), and any other dependents, as war captives. The *aga* continued to rule as long as he preserved his physical and mental abilities. According to a Yakut tradition, aged parents and also sick and crippled people, unable to work, were doomed to die and were even buried alive after three days of abundant entertainment.

Trostchansky, who lived as a political exile among the Yakut for about twenty years, characterizes them as egoistical utilitarians.[1] He

[1] Trostchansky, V. F., Notes on the Yakut of the Yakutsk District (*Memoirs, Imperial Society for Archæology, History, and Ethnography*, vol. 27, parts 2–4, Kasan, 1911, in Russian), 97.

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181 888 says that aged people are not in favor; they are beaten by their own children and are often forced to leave their dwellings and to beg from house to house. They are not admitted by the rich and poor people force them to do hard work, like dressing skins (Figs. 17, 18), for every bit of food.

583 614 586 The Yakut look for brides for their sons not only outside of their clans (*us*, *nasleg*), but outside of the *ulus*, or union of clans. A girl, say the Yakut, is really a lot of aliens. This saying is reminiscent of the old time marriage by capture. Marriage is now also exogamic, but *kalym* (bride-price) is given in money, cattle, and other goods. Practically, the *kalym* may be regarded as an exchange of presents. What the parents of the bride receive from the parents of the bridegroom is almost equivalent to what they give her when she leaves their house. Often the bride carries with her cattle and goods of a greater value than her parents received that she may not be reproached by the bridegroom's relatives for bringing only a small dowry with her. The young bride remains under the protection of her clan and family. Many common law customs regulate disagreements and dissensions: If a young woman leaves her husband because she dislikes him, her dowry remains with him; but, if she accuses him of cruelties, relatives on both sides decide the matter. The Yakut do not like to appeal to the Russian courts.

We have previously mentioned the exogamic character of the Yakut marriages, but some other tendencies have been observed in the northern districts of Yakut Province. The few rich families endeavor to keep their horses, cattle, and grazing places within a certain group of families through marriage of close relatives, insofar as this is permitted by the Russian church. By special permission of a bishop, even cousins are permitted to marry. In one case, known to the author, a man lived with his niece, a marital relation forbidden by the Church, though his neighbors avoided mentioning this irregularity to strangers.

562 177 The old Yakut clan was governed by family representatives or a family council in which women very often played a conspicuous rôle. After the Russian conquest of Yakut Province, clan ties became less important and the family head more despotic.

628 581 682 The Yakut were warlike and blood vengeance between clans occurred very often, but reconciliation was often sought through payment of a ransom or by giving a girl in marriage, the best way to end hostilities. It was more difficult to compound assassinations within the clan. To kill the murderer would deprive the clan of another member and the punishment had to take the form of ransom, service, or public disapproval.

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similar to that of the Yakut. A bow is illustrated in Fig. 59 and a hand and arm protector in Fig. 60.

Yakut warriors (*sāpi, sāpi kisita*) were usually mounted horsemen (*minjār*), but there were also foot soldiers (*satÿkisita*). Their weapons (*sāp*) consisted of a light bent bow (*sā*), a quiver (*kāsāx, sādax*), and arrows (*aya*)[1].

Social Position of the Yakut Blacksmith. The Yakut blacksmith (*ūs, timir ūsa, timirjil*) has the same rank as a shaman (see p. 107). According to one tradition the forefather of the Yakut, Elliei, was the first blacksmith. Another traditional blacksmith, named Chyky, was the teacher of warriors. He forged weapons for them and gave advice. Smithing and iron mining are inherited in certain clans. Some clans are composed of miners and iron founders, while others are smiths. The Yakut believe that blacksmiths are able to cure sick people by natural means and not through the assistance of spirits, as do shamans. They are regarded as clever, intelligent, and experienced. A blacksmith of the ninth generation is believed to possess some supernatural power. Such an individual has no fear of evil spirits and can forge the iron pendants for a shaman's garb without danger to himself. Spirits are generally afraid of the rattling of iron and the noise produced by the smith's bellows. It is of interest to note that there are no women blacksmiths, while, on the contrary, women shamans, called *udahan*, are believed to be more powerful than men shamans.

Among all Siberian natives the blacksmith ranks high. His vocation is not regarded as a trade which may be learned by any one but as a divine gift. He is protected by special spirits. Among many African tribes the blacksmith is represented among the officers of the court. In Shugnan and other places in Pamir, the blacksmith's art is regarded as a gift from the prophet David. He is more revered than the *mulla* (literate man who is able to read the Koran). His assistants as well as any onlookers must show respect to the master and his implements. The blacksmith must be clean spiritually and physically; he must avoid evil thoughts and deeds and must wash before beginning to work. The smithy is venerated as a place of worship and when there is no special building for prayers and social gatherings, the smithy takes its place. During communal feasts the anvil is treated with sour milk.[2]

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[1] Arrows had names differing in accordance with their shape and material: thus, *kustuk*, a single pointed iron or bone arrow; *cyca*, a bifurcated arrow; *onohos*, a spear-like bone arrow; *maltar onohos*, an arrow with a rounded head of bone or wood, used for squirrel hunting that the skin may not be defaced.

[2] Sarubin, J., Légende du Sugnan sur le premier Forgeron (*Bulletin de l'Académie des Sciences de l'USSR*, Series 6, Vol. 20, Part 2, pp. 1165–1170, Leningrad, 1926, in Russian).

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539 Onogoi, as the chief, was given the first goblet. When he took it, he fell to the ground, unconscious and sightless, with stiffened limbs. The people believed it to be a message from the gods because Onogoi had damned Er-Elliei and mutilated the cattle created by god.

Shortly after Onogoi died and all his riches vanished. His only son became poor and subsisted on the booty of his black dog.

The Yakut living in different districts originated from emigrants of the Yakut district, who partly voluntarily and partly forced by powerful tribes, settled the distant region.

After the death of Er-Elliei the kumiss festival was celebrated in the same manner in all the *uluses*.

776 782 756 [614] The kumiss festival (*ysyax*) has both social and religious significance. During the summer, in olden times, every rich man arranged a kumiss festival at which all members of the clan assembled and were entertained. Other people, and frequently whole clans, were also invited. During the festival defensive and offensive leagues were concluded. Every such ceremony was initiated with sacrifices, which were accompanied with songs, dances, games, horse and foot races, and other contests.

Two kumiss festivals in honor of the deities were arranged during the year by the owners of large droves of mares. The spring festival was consecrated to the Supreme Being and the head of the benevolent deities of the class of "creators" (*ayi*),—to Lord-Bright-Creator. The first milking of mares in the spring is also consecrated to the Supreme Being. The spring festival is called *Ayi ysyaxa* (kumiss festival in honor of the "creators"). Spring, as the period of the revival of nature, was the season of happiness and abundance. In the prayers addressed to the "creators" they are implored to bestow their blessing upon the people. The spring kumiss festival takes place in the open air. In the midst of a large smooth grass meadow is erected a kind of altar, consisting of two posts with a cross beam and three young birch trees with young shoots on them (see p. 201). The altar is hung with sacrificial horsehair; on the ground in front of it are placed ornamented birchbark and oxhide barrels filled with kumiss. The skin barrels are tied to the altar-frame by long ornamented strips of soft elk leather, so that the vessels will not collapse when softened by the liquid in them.

The ceremony commences with sacrifices to Lord-Bright-Creator and to other "creators." Their names are uttered by the steward of the festival, who may be a shaman or an older member of the clan. The sacrifices consist of libations of kumiss to every deity, in the direction of the dawn; formerly horses were often consecrated by being driven to the

7: Shklovsky -- 50 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 539, 582, 614

"The Yakut chooses his wife from another clan. 'The bride who dwells among her own people cannot be happy,' says the Yakutian proverb, and 'Happy is the daughter who marries far away from the parental home."

16: Great Britain Admiralty --164 [4] G-3 (no date) 1920 Yakut
116, 614, 627

" The clans were originally very large, when the Yakuts owned great herds of horses; now that cattle-rearing predominates, the herds and the clans have become smaller. A clan by its own laws is responsible for the crimes committed by its members; sometimes one clan makes an alliance with another, celebrated by joint sacrifice and festival (ysyakh). Marriage-gifts are also a symbol of reconciliation between clans, and compensation for damage done in their feuds."

16: Great Britain Admiralty -- 168 G-3 (no date) 1920 Yakut
116, 177, 582, 836, 614

"The clans consist of blood relations. Their marriages are exogamous, but the influence of their neighbours, the Yukaghir, has led the Artic Yakuts to introduce endogamous marriage, and the frequent sexual relations that take place before marriage are always endogamous."

18: Priklonski--81 [2] E-5 (no date) 1891 Yakut
116, 614, 753, 756, 776

It is, above all, up to the shaman, after being called to a patient to find out the name of the spirit in question, because every spirit causes only those diseases which are peculiar to his sib. He must, moreover, find out, what kind of sacrifice has to be offered in order to appease the spirit and make him abstain from his hostility towards the patient. For this purpose the exorcist performs a mystic ceremony before the couch of the patient. After having dressed in his official dress (kumà) he takes his drum (djugjur), which is his leader through the nether world and the seven heavens, and invokes the spirits of his dead ancestors and relatives, the spirits of mighty shamans. Through their mediation he goes down to the subterraneous world of the spirits, then climbs on strongly-turned ropes from one heaven to the other (which he reports in his mystic and ecstatic songs) asking whoever he is meeting: "who is the spirit that keeps my protégé in prison?" After a long migration he receives information on the permanent domicile of the spirit; finally, further devices are applied to get into negotiations with the found demon under the supervision of the protectors of the shaman.

19: Kharuzin -- 39-40 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -1-2
116. 582, 614

The clan system of the Yakuts of the Yakutsk district finds its expression in the following principal features:

... Each clan, or subdivision of a clan, taking its descent from one progenitor, possesses a definite territory, the rights to which derive from occupation and remoteness. From generation to generation, the kinsmen use the same sections of land or fishing sites which they possessed in the olden time. In its agrarian aspect the clan thus represents an isolated group, although at present, in the majority of cases, the community of neighbors has taken the place of the clan.

... In general, kinship ties play a very important role among the Yakuts in the question of wedlock. Up to the present the clan constitutes an exogamic group. While paying little attention to relationship [RCH: i. e., geneological relationship] as an obstacle to marriage, the Yakuts [40], according to M. Pripuzov, not only consider kinship [RCH: i. e., patrilineal kinship] up to five removes an obstacle to marriage, but in general do not take wives from their own clan. Formerly, rich Yakuts even sought, insofar as possible, to secure wives for their sons from other naslegi. Inasmuch, on the other hand, as kinship through the female line is not taken into account in the making of marriages, data communicated by Prince Kostrov(1) demonstrate that not only father and

1. Ocherk iuridicheskoe by-ta Ĭ Akutov p. 277

19: Kharuzin -- 39-40 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -2
116, 582, 614

son or two brothers can marry their own sisters-german [RCH: presumably cousins who are not members of the patrilineal kin group] but an uncle can take to wife his own neice (the daughter of his sister). Inasmuch as such marriages are not permitted by the local priesthood, the Yakuts have resort to the following friction: the betrothed hires his fiancée, in the capacity of a servant, and lives with her sometimes throughout his whole life as if she were his wife. The recollection that all kinsfolk bear the same clan surname has led to the prohibition of marriages between individuals of the same name, if they live in the same locality.

19: Kharuzin --40-41 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 554, 585, 614, 627, 796

The oldest kinsman in the clan, or the īye-ūsa, is always heaped with honors, if he is both rich and has never been put on trial. To him pertains the jurisdiction in trifling quarrels between kinsfolk. The following ceremonies serve to recall the religious functions that he (Ysekh) formerly exercised a. At the time of the spring festival, which bears a strictly clan character, they bring to him, first of all, a large wooden vessel (Choron) containing kumiss; he pronounces a prayer of thanks to the gods and then pours the kumiss upon the fire. b. At the time of the arrival of the betrothed at the bridegroom's yurt, they take from the sleigh of the betrothed, and place upon a table in front of the fire place the boiled head of a horse, whose eyes are covered with butter, to whose ears are attached intestines filled with horse's blood, and a wooden cup filled with butter. After this the betrothed enters the yurt, and stands, having first untied her girdle, on the right side of the komelok [RCH: i. e., the fireplace] where she is met by the oldest kinsman, whose place is sometimes taken nowadays by the most honored guest, who, kneeling, throws into the fire [41] pieces of meat, blood and butter, and blesses the bride. For the completion of this ceremony, whose obvious object is to unite the bride with the bridegroom's home, the oldest kinsman secures for his use the head, blood and butter brought into the yurt, and in addition the sum of one ruble.

19: Kharuzin -- 41 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 614, 651, 732, 736

The solidarity of the kinsmen further expresses itself in extensive mutual aid. "When disaster strikes," writes M. Pripuzov, "each clan assists its indigent kinfolk, either through an assessment on the tax-paying individuals, or through the contributions of the separate families." The support of the kutalani, i. e., of the persons unable to provide a subsistence for themselves (aged cripples, orphans, having neither father nor mother, etc.) constitutes an obligation of the clan or the separate families which compose it. The closest kinsmen are the customary guardians of the incapacitated members of the tribe: the mentally diseased, deaf and dumb, blind, etc.

19: Kharuzin -- 41 [2] E-4. (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 582, 597, 608, 614

The exclusiveness of the clan structure finds expression among the Yakuts of the Yakutsk district in the fact that entrance into the clan for an outsider is almost impossible. Cases of adoption of strangers into the family are in fact encountered among the Yakuts, but only girls are accepted from a strange clan. The adoption of children of the male sex is practiced between close relations or in the most extreme case within the confines of the clan. The adopted child takes the name of the adoptive father, is considered a close relation of the members of the family of the latter, in consequence of which marriage between them and the adopted child is forbidden.

Artificial kinship, in addition to cases of adoption, is also established through foster kinship [BK; in Russian, molochnim rodstvom, literally, "by milk kinship," presumably referring to cases in which adoption is based on suckling of child by woman of the adoptive family]; it is considered as significant as blood kinship. As concerns the swearing of brothership, the almost universal mode of establishing artifical kinship, M. Pripuzov confirms the conclusion, to which M. Sieroszewski apparently also arrives, that at the present time it has fallen into desuetude among the Yakuts. Its existence at a former time, however, is to a certain degree proved by the traditions of the Yakuts.

19: Kharuzin -- 42-43 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 462, 562, 578, 614, 837

If the husband beat his wife without good reason, from the point of view of the Yakuts, she has the right to complain to the clan government or to apply for protection to the Natives'Court. The husband is not oblidged to maintain fidelity; he can abandon his wife, live in another place, cohabit with another woman. The wife, on the contrary, must preserve fidelity, although occasional relations with other men, if they take place with the consent of the husband, are regarded by the Yakuts with complete indifference. [43] Although at the present time the personal position of the wife in relation to her husband has changed for the better, in comparison with the past, to her lot, nevertheless, continues to fall the most arduous domestic labor. Except where the family is rich, or the wife is richer than the husband, the duties of the woman include more than the care of the household; the care of the cattle, the making of cheese and butter, the painting of the yurt, and often even the mowing of hay, cutting of wood, etc., if the husband cannot manage the other jobs by himself.

19: Kharuzin -- 43-44 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1 -2
116, 421, 562, 614

The property rights of women are extremely limited; however, even in this direction certain changes are taking place under the influence of the gradual recognition of woman's capacity. These innovations, however, are apparently only beginning to penetrate the consciousness of the Yakuts, and have not yet succeeded in conclusively changing the archaic views, denying property rights to women.

In relations to her own family group the woman is completely without rights: she must marry into a strange clan, and it is understandable that her kinsmen look upon her as a severed member.

Each clan or familial unit, under the influence of the impulse of self-preservation in the struggle for existence, strives insofar as possible to insure its economic existence through the accumulation of wealth. Naturally, it jealously guards its property against transfer into the hands of members of a strange clan; it is here that we must seek the reason for the fact that women have no rights in relation to the property belonging to their kin group. Among the Yakuts, the latter, as is the case everywhere with peoples on a low level of economic development, permits a girl to accumulate property by her personal labor: the product of her personal exertions, whether sewing or other handicraft, becomes part of her possessions, but among the Yakuts, as is the case everywhere, the girl secures the right of ownership of the products of her labor only in the degree that she performs this labor during her hours of leisure and rest, after having performed the household duties which fall to her share. The same rule,

it appears,applies [44] to married women. Woman, as a member of her kin group prior to marriage, and subsequently in the capacity of a worker for her husband and his group, has only a portion of the time for her own use, and the group concedes to her as personal property only what she can produce after satisfying the needs of her father's or her husband's family.

19: Kharuzin -- 44 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut- 1-2
116, 421, 428, 562, 614

The absence of property rights on the part of women in relation to their kin group in graphically expressed in the exclusion of women from inheritance. If the economic and administrative principle lying at the foundation of the family constructed on a blood basis makes quite natural the rule of Yakut customary law, that sisters cannot inherit from brothers, that upon the death of a brother his cultivated land passes to another brother, although the latter might already have a farmstead, then in the exclusion of women from inheritance from the parents, where only daughters survived, we must see a direct consequence of the clan structure, in which the kinsmen vigilantly watch to see that the clan property does not pass to a strange clan, which inevitably happens in the case of the marriage of a girl-legatee.

M. Pripuzov informs us that upon the death of a person survived only by daughters, the legatees are in the first place his brothers, i. e., the uncles on the paternal side. Further, if the father of the deceased is alive, then by the general rule of Yakut customary law in the district investigated, which makes the parents the legatees of their children deceased without issue, he secures a larger share of the inheritance than the other relations. Where death takes place without male issue, the situation is the same as if there were no issue at all. Finally, the remaining relations come in for their share of the inheritance. A part of the property is set aside for the support and subsistence of the daughters, the remainder is divided between the relations with the closer

relations securing a larger part (the father gets more than the rest), while the more distant relatives get a lesser share. A married daughter, like the unmarried daughters, is excluded form sharing in the paternal inheritance; in any case, she cannot inherit her father's cultivated land, and if there are no direct heirs, the farm passes to the closest relations.

19: Kharuzin --45 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 428, 562, 583, 614

The brothers, excluding their sisters from inheritance of the paternal property, are nevertheless obliged to support their unmarried sisters, to concern themselves with giving them in marriage, and to provide them with dowries from the general property. Mr. Priklonski, however, (Tri goda v ÎAkutskoi oblasti [three years in the Yakutsk territory]. Zhivaîa Starina , 1890, pt. 3, p. 80). notes that the share of the daughters in the division of property upon the death of the father is equal to that of the brothers; this share goes to the brothers, for the support of the sisters.

That in effect it is the economic principle, in union with the blood principle, and not the fact of the grant of a dowry to a girl entering into marriage, that lies at the basis of the exclusion of women from the paternal inheritance, is demonstrated by the fact that the dowry itself does not in any way correspond to the shares which fall to the lot of the sons upon the death of the father. Mr. Pripuzov unfortunately communicates only extremely fragmentary and incomplete information concerning the size of the dowry, concerning the objects which go to make it up, and concerning the relation of the personal property of the girl, accumulated by her own labor, to the dowry given by her parents at the time of marriage.

19: Kharuzin -- 45-46 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -1-2
116, 178, 421, 431, 583, 614

In the Sbornik obychnago prava Sibirskikh inorodtser (Compilation of the Customary Law of the Siberian Natives), issued by Mr. Samokvasov (pp. 221-22), reference is made to the rule of the Yakut customary law, whereby "the dowry is paid as compensation to the bridegroom and his relatives for the payment of the kalym ; the dowry is given in cattle, clothes and sometimes in money, amounting to one half of the stipulated kalym; the bride may not have a dowry valued at less that half the kalym, while a larger dowry, sometimes exceeding the entire kalym (which very rarely happens), depends upon the will of her parents." Mr. Sieroszewski also remarks that the payment made to the parents of the bride as well as the gifts presented to the relatives and match-makers by the bridegroom are subsequently returned to the bridegroom in the form of dowry and gifts. It is only the expenses connected with the reception and "other insignificant additional expenditures" that the bridegroom pays without being reimbursed. Unlike the kalym, the dowry does not constitute an indispensable element in marriage. Although the relatives of the bridegroom receive the bride rather coolly if she brings to her new household less than was anticipated, and although quarrels and lawsuits ensue if she brings a dowry smaller than agreed upon, in some cases the parents do not give any dowry even if they receive a considerable kalym. Public opinion censures such actions, but the mere fact that such actions take place gives support to the opinions of Mr. Sieroszewski that dowries are a comparatively late institution among the Yakuts; on the

other hand, this explains the fact that up to the present time, according to Mr. Pripuzov it was the custom in the Yakutsk region not to make arrangements concerning the dowry and that the size of the dowry depended completely on the good will of the parents. [46]

The return of the whole or a part of the kalym to the clan or family of the bridegroom is the ordinary source of the dowry; this practice develops principally in the period of decline of the custom of purchasing one's wife, when the formerly dominant custom of purchasing the bride gradually loses its inherent sense and continues to maintain itself through tradition. But the Yakuts of the locality investigated by Mr. Pripuzov apparently have not yet elaborated definite rules, regulating the size of the dowry: all depends on the will of the father, which carries us to that period of development of the dowry, when the latter did not yet constitute a stable institution, and was given by the parents out of a desire to better the position of the daughter given in marriage in her husband's clan group by the return of a part of the kalym, to dispose the strange clan group favorably toward the young woman. Obviously, in this form the dowry has nothing in common with a distribution to the girl of a part of the property of her kin group. Her family does not deprive itself of the smallest part of its own property: the marriage is consummated at the expense of the bridegroom, and the family of the bride only denies itself, and that often only to a certain extent, the acquisition of the property which is a product of the sale of the daughter into a strange clan.

19: Kharuzin --46-47 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 421, 428, 562, 583, 614

Neither Mr. Pripuzov, nor, as far as we know, any other investigators of the customary law of the Yakuts, have given us a clear answer to the question as to the relationship in which the personally earned property of the girl stands to her dowry. Is this personal property.. [47]..combined with the dowry given by the parents, or does it form a separate type of female personal ownership among the Yakuts? We do not know. As concerns the dowry given by the parents at the time of the daughter's marriage, the absence of rights on the part of the woman in the agnatic group of her husband, as well as the very origin of the dowry in the returned part of the kalym, render completely natural the rule of Yakut customary law, whereby the woman is not the owner of her dowry. The latter, writes Mr. Pripuzov, "is completely at the disposal of the husband." The husband is the owner of his wife's dowry; he answers to no one for his squandering of it. A logical consequence of this order of things are the following rules, noted by Mr. Pripuzov, in the Yakutsk district: 1. In the case of the death of the wife the dowry is not returned, but passes to the husband and his children. 2. In the case of the death of the husband, if the couple had no children of the male sex, the wife can take her dowry and return to her parents. But she can only have the dowry back under the condtition that her husband made a disposition in that sense before his death: in its absence, the dowry, as a part of the familial-clan property, passes to the closest relatives of the deceased, and the wife has no right to claim it back from the heirs.

19: Kharuzin -- 47-48 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -1-2
116, 178, 562, 587, 614

The right of the widow in the event of a childless marriage to return to her own family, the right of the husband to arrange before his death for the return of the dowry to his widow--all these rules, it appears, rose under the influence of the progressive softening of views on the personal and property incapacity of women. At an earlier time she was completely the property of her husband's group. Actually, we have no definite information concerning the existence of the levirate among the Yakuts at a former time; but the rules forbidding women to show themselves before the father-in-law and brothers-in-law, and vice versa, obviously bearing the character of so-called "sexual precaution" are traces of a one-time polyandry; finally, the absence among the Yakuts of any proper term for "widow," etc. (Sieroszewski, 569), compel us to assume that at a more remote time [48] the widow was considered the personal property of the family of the husband and probably passed to them as a piece of property. (1)

1. Contrary to the evidence of Mr. Gorokhov (Vsesoiuznoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo, Vostochno-Sibirskii Otdel, Izviestiia, 1883), Mr. Priklonsky mentions many instances of relations between the daughter-in-law and members of her husband's family: "This form of co-habitation is practiced often and quite freely, much more freely than, for instance among the Russians who conceal sin more

carefully (Tri goda v ⁀Akutskoi oblasti [Three Years in the Yakutsk Region]. Zhivaia⁀ Starina, 1891, Pt. 3, p. 61).

19: Kharuzin -- 48-49 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 178, 428, 562, 589, 614

At the present time a widow can remain with her children after the death of her husband. The liberating tendency in favor of women in the development of customary law in the Yakutsk district is reflected in the fact that if a widow has young children of the male sex, she becomes the complete mistress of her husband's property; she freely disposes of it until the children reach their majority. More archaic views on woman's rights, however, are reflected in the fact that when the children reach their majority they have the right to proceed to the division of their grandfather's and father's property without seeking the consent of their mother. To her is assigned some indefinite part of the property, but always smaller than the share of each of the sons. The right of wives to one-fourth part of their husband's property, which is attested to in the Sbornik obychnago prava Sibiriskikh inordt͡sev [Compilation of the Customary Law of the Siberian Natives] p. 234. probably was the result of the influence of the Russians, and apparantly found very little reflection in life. The Yakuts of the Yakutsk district, at least, do not know this rule, if we are to judge by the information imparted to us by Mr. Pripuzov. The Yakut clan, permitting a certain economic independence to a widow with young children of the male sex, who are independent members of the clan unit, completely sets aside the widow, if her late husband left only children of the female sex. In such an eventuality, the situation, as we noted above, is held to be the same as if the man had died without issue: a certain part of the property is assigned to the widow with daughters,

all the rest goes to the relatives of the deceased. Incidentally, a more humane attitude toward women sometimes induces these relatives to permit the widow and her daughters to live on the farmstead of her deceased husband, depriving her, however, of the right to dispose of the farm. In the event of the death of the widow, [49] (or if she should marry a second time) the farm passes to the relatives of the deceased husband.

The facts adduced here testify that despite certain improvements in the attitude toward the personal and property rights of women, the position of the latter is still far from enviable: clan and household bases principally regulate the structure of Yakut life.

One cannot yet speak of the independence or equal rights of women among the Yakuts: even the rule making the parents the legatees of their children who died without issue, changes its aspect, if the deceased is survived only by a mother; while the father inherits all or the greater part of the property, the rights of the mother or widow to the property of children dead without issue are only equal to the rights of the other heirs.

19: Kharuzin --50-51 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 593, 597, 614, 672, 858

The position of sons in the parental home is considerably more independent than that of the daughters. Nevertheless, in personal relations the patriarchal parental authority finds a many-sided application. In addition to the right of giving sons out for adoption, a right which is limited with respect to the sons by the condition that the adoption take place within the confines of the clan, the parents can put their sons out to hire or to apprenticeship. Parents further have the right to use the earnings of their children; their labor goes to the profit of the family; they are obliged to support their parents, and in the event of non-fulfillment of this obligation, the parents can make complaint before the elders of the clan, who, in accordance with the earnings of the son, or his competence order him to support his father. But all these rules have significance only as long as [51] the son has not left the household or married. In general, if the parents feed, clothe their children, "seek their good," and the children feed and support their parents in their old age, bury them decently after death, hold a wake on the 40th day [RCH: on the 40th day the soul of the deceased departs from the earth] and finally place a stone monument over the grave, they are considered to have mutually fulfilled their obligations.

19: Kharuzin --54 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 421, 428, 594, 614

The patriarchal principle in the Yakut family finds its expression in the right of the eldest son to dispose absolutely as he pleases with the family property. Under the prevailing custom for the grown-up, married sons to separate, as a result of which the eldest son exercises supremacy only over young children and bachelors, it is perfectly natural for the eldest son to have the right to alienate a part of the family property or to augment it by purchases, without the consent of the remaining members of the family. But although he is an independent agent over the family property with respect to the members of his own family, the eldest son nevertheless finds himself under the control of the clan. The eldest son must find the means for the punctual payment of taxes and the fulfillment of obligations; therefore if he is found to be squandering the family property the clan administration has the right to remove him from his position of responsibility. Moreover, the eldest son, having the right to rent out or mortgage the portion of the family land which has fallen to his share, connot exchange it for another without the knowledge of the clan elders.

Into the make-up of the family property go the earnings of a son who has not separated; but the latter can have his own personal property; an inheritance from a grandfather or grandmother, or presents, constitute his own personal porperty, of which the father cannot always dispose without the consent of the son: the father, for example, cannot take it, or alienate it, without the consent of the son.

19: Kharuzin -- 57-58 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 177, 428, 594, 614, 763

Obviously under the influence of the Russians, the practice of drawing up written testaments had developed among the Yakuts. But the rights of the testator to dispose of his property are circumscribed by the interests of his clan, which in certain instances may not recognize the testament as valid. At the present time the Yakuts make both written and oral testaments, which deal with the division of property among the heirs. In general, it seems, the Yakuts formerly loved and still love to make dispositions before their death. When a Yakut feels the approach of death, writes Mr. Shchukin, for example, he summons the heirs and enjoins them to continue their acquaintance with such and such a one, to beware of another, to take revenge on still another; in detail he exposes the reasons, and the heirs will not utter nor forget [58] a single word, and when their turn comes to die, they will pass the testament on to their heirs. On the basis of these oral dispositions made at the time of death, it was easy to take to the custom, borrowed from the Russians, of written testaments. The contemporary Yakut regards the written and oral testament with the same respect. The signature of a priest is considered quite sufficient for the first, whereas the presence of heirs and relatives is required for the second type of testament. The Yakuts do not have executors.

The rights of the testator to dispose of the property are extremely circumscribed: the testament itself is in the last analysis chiefly a precaution against quarrels over the division of the property.

19: Kharuzin -- 57-58 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-2
116, 177, 428, 594, 614, 763

It is precisely this consideration that is held by Prince Kostrov Ocherk ĭuridicheskoe byta Îakutov (Juridical Customs of the Yakuts, p. 286), to be one of the chief reasons for the development among the Yakuts of the custom of making an oral testament. "Each Yakut knows well that if he should die without a detailed distribution of his property among the members of the family, it would give rise to endless and destructive quarrels among them, and therefore oral testaments among the Yakuts are very customary. Feeling the approach of death or simply finding himself very ill, before all the members of the family the Yakut makes a detailed assignment, what share and precisely what is to be given to the wife, to the sons, daughters, foster-children. When he speaks of the cattle he even cites their color."

19: Kharuzin -- 58-59 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 428, 594, 614, 775

The conviction that the soul of the deceased will remain 40 days in the dwelling, induces the heirs to carry out precisely the provisions of the testament, the more so since they proceed to the division of the property very soon after the death of the father, which to a certain extent works for the betterment of the widow's position. Thus the husband, if his children are under age, can at the time of death designate his wife as the "elder" of the family, can assign to her a part of his property, can express the wish that the wife's dowry should be returned to her. The dying man does not have the right to designate any persons as heirs except those who are heirs by virtue of their blood relationship with the testator. He cannot deprive his sons of their portions of the inheritance in favor of one [59] of them, even though he would dispose but of the acquired property, and not the patrimony; even in cases where the testator has no children, he cannot bequeath either the acquired or patrimonial property to his wife. In all these instances the testament is held invalid: the sons deprived of theirinheritance in favor of one of their brothers, the kinsmen, to whose injury the testator left his property tohis widow, will claim their rights, and the Clan Administration, or the Natives' Court, handling inheritance questions, will retrieve the property from the son or widow, in order to divide it up among the heirs. In a word, the written testament is held invalid, if the lawful heirs are deprived of their inheritance; it is put into effect only if the heirs and relations are satisfied with the will of the testator. Permitting in theory the right to dispose of his property on the part of the

testator, in practice the clan limits it extremely in the interests of the clan group, guarding the rights of the lawful heirs, whose economic welfare cannot be alien to the whole clan unit. In this right to deny the validity of the testament if, in the opinion of the clan, it does not satisfy in equal degree the lawful heirs, one can see a vivid example of the living force of clan existence, which despite changing conditions, permeates the structure of the life of the Yakuts.

19: Kharuzin -- 59 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 429, 614, 736

The clan guards over the interests of orphans: guardians, according to Mr. Pripuzov, can only be the closest relatives of the ward. But if a person, becoming a guardian by virtue of the closeness of kinship ties, for some reason does not inspire confidence, he must present one or two guarantors that the protected property will remain whole. The offspring of the cattle constituting the property of the ward goes to the guardian, and must not be returned to the ward upon his coming of age.

19: Kharuzin --62 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 178, 421, 614, 621

One must keep in mind that at present the community of neighbors has taken the place of the agrarian community of kinsmen, and that certain rights, formerly belonging to the kinsmen, have passed to the former. Besides occupation, labor, increment, the Yakuts also recognize finding, barter, purchase and gifts as sources of rights to property.

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developed class relationships and certain very archaic survivals of ancient times. By the time the Russians arrived in the first half of the 17th century, the Yakuts had divided up into independent tribes. The largest and strongest of these were the Kangalastsy and Nams on the left bank of the Lena, and the Megins, Borogons, Betuns and Baturustsy between the Lena and the Amga; these very large tribes (to judge by the Russian tribute registers) numbered from 2000 to 5000 persons each. The smaller tribal groupings, some of which were independent and some of which belonged to those mentioned above, were reckoned in dozens. In the Russian sources these tribes are called "volosts," but the Yakut name for them was evidently d'on or aymakh. These tribes often warred with one another, and sometimes banded together temporarily for joint operations. All members of one tribe were considered fellow clansmen, which, among other things, was indicated by the fact that the "volosts" were exogamic groups. In turn, the tribes divided into smaller clan groups. The bond between fellow clansmen showed up in the custom of mutual assistance and vendetta, which, incidentally, was often replaced by blood money.

At this period, however, the clan-tribal structure was already in a state of decomposition. The tribes and clans were headed by the military aristocracy—the toyons. These possessed large herds of cattle and employed the labor of slaves and dependent fellow clansmen on their farms; they were also the military leaders. Heading detachments of armed servants and junior fellow clansmen, the toyons raided each other's territory, and frequently looted the farms of the free members of the community, seizing their cattle and destroying their economic independence. These toyon wars and raids were one of the factors which speeded up the decomposition of the clan commune. The ruined members of the commune were reduced to the status of "balyksyts" (poor people without cattle, or fishermen), or else became the indentured slaves of the toyons. Most of the slaves (kuluts or bokans) originated in this way.

The system of slavery among the Yakuts was fairly peculiar in form, containing certain patriarchal elements. The number of slaves was small; even the richer toyons had no more than 15 or 20, and much more frequently there were one to three slaves for each master. The slave usually had his own family and often lived in a separate yurt. Slavery was hereditary. Some of the slaves—the adult males—were part of the armed band of the toyon. On the other hand, cases were known in which the slaves led a hard life and their masters treated them cruelly, and we also know of the manifestation, although embryonic, of class feeling against exploitation (flight by groups of slaves and so on).

The problem of whether or not there was feudalism among the Yakuts before the Russians arrived still remains unsolved in Soviet historical-ethnographic literature.

Some writers (S. V. Bakhrushin and O. V. Ionova) think that early feudal relations among the Yakuts began to form in the pre-Russian period; they consider the presence of groups of semidependent people "living close to" the toyons, as well as the custom of lending cattle for grazing (the later khahaas), to be signs of this. Tokarev considers that a feudal-type relationship only began to form among the Yakuts after they had been annexed to Russia.

As regards land ownership, the older communal-clan system was still in force just before the Russians arrived. The communal form of land use not only predominated in forest hunting grounds and pastures, but the fisheries and even the meadows were still by and large in common use. Nevertheless, the meadows and fisheries had already been taken over to

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the whole of their lives, and only occasionally eat their fill . . . it is a country of systematic starvation."[4] But the Yakut toiling masses were particularly badly off during the long and severe Yakutiyan winter. "The periods of hunger," wrote another observer, "when there is absolutely nothing to eat, when all the crumbs have been picked up and consumed, when the cows carrying calves are not milked, and nature, paralyzed by the cold, firmly resists all attempts to find food, are repeated every year and two-thirds of the Yakut population have to suffer for a fairly prolonged period on this account."[5]

On the other hand, individuals with fortunes of tens of thousands of rubles stood out among the wealthy Yakut hierarchy. The wealthy estates developed mainly through trade and various kinds of speculation, although the owners did not hesitate to apply the old patriarchal-feudal methods of exploitation in amassing their wealth.

Crushed by the omnipotence of the toyons, the masses of poor people in the ulus hardly dared to protest or fight for their rights. It was only now and then that the toyon oppression gave rise to outbursts of protest, but these were sporadic and promptly suppressed. This was the fate of the revolt of Vasiliy Manchara (1830-1850), hero of the Yakut legends.

Given the sharp class contradictions, it was extremely characteristic that certain very archaic survivals were retained in the Yakut social structure and left on it their own strange imprint. Some of these survivals were nothing more than form devoid of its original content.

Right up to the Revolution the Yakuts retained their division into clans (*аймаки*). But the clans were purely administrative units legalized by the "Native Code" of 1822, although they were historically descended from the ancient clans of the clan-tribal stage.

At the head of these administrative clans stood elected elders (who were called in the old-fashioned Yakut language "princelings" (kinees, or achchygyy kinees—"small princeling"). Several clans banded into a nasleg, which was also governed by an elected elder (in actual fact often hereditary), known in the Yakut language as ulakhan kinees or "great prince," who together with the clan elders made up the "clan administration." A group of naslegs formed an ulus, at the head of which there was an elected ulus head and a "native council." The ulusy, and also some of the naslegs, and even the clans, were historically associated with the ancient Yakut tribes, whose names they continued to bear—for example, the Meginskiy, Borogonskiy, Baturusskiy, Namskiy, Western and Eastern Kangalasskiy and other ulusy, the Betyunskiy, Batulinskiy, Ospetskiy and other naslegs.

At the end of the 19th century there were in all 17 ulusy, divided into 230 naslegs and 934 clans in the Yakut district (in the four okrugs—Yakutskiy, Vilyuyskiy, Verkhoyanskiy and Kolymskiy, since in the fifth—Olekminskiy Okrug—the ulusy were replaced by volosts of the Russian type).

Only the terminology of the tribal structure was retained in this administrative system. In actual fact, the tribal administrations and native councils were only organs of power of the ruling toyon stratum

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[4] V. F. Troshchanskiy. Nabroski o yakutakh Yakutskogo okruga (Notes on the Yakuts in the Yakutskiy Okrug). Kazan', 1911, p. 17.

[5] V. L. Seroshevskiy. Yakuty (opyt etnograficheskogo issledovaniya), 1 (The Yakuts [Attempt at an Ethnographic Study]). St. Petersburg, 1896, p.423.

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(naturally, subordinate in turn to the tsarist administration); those who sat at the head of them, the elders and chief elders, were either toyons in origin, or mere servants who obeyed them implicitly. The clan and nasleg meetings (munnyakh), at which the poor people dared not say a word, played the same part.

Thus, the frequently expressed opinion that the clan structure was retained among the Yakuts right up to the 20th century is a profound error.

Just as erroneous is the opinion of certain ethnographers that there were elements of the matriarchate among the Yakuts. This view is based on the fact that there was a division of the aga-uus (paternal clan) into smaller groups, iye-uuha (literally, "maternal clan"). The latter do indeed figure in the 19th-century official documents under the name of "tribal clans." But, despite the Yakut name, these small groups were not genuine maternal clans; kinship and descent were not reckoned on the female but on the male side. The name "iye-uus" is evidently to be explained by the fact that these subdivisions were descended from one clan progenitor, though from different wives.

More direct, although also more or less modified, survivals of primitive-communal relations were retained by the Yakuts in certain characteristic customs, such as, for example, elements of collectivism in fishing. The Yakuts retained the custom of communal net-fishing in rivers and lakes belonging to individual naslegs and clans. The catch, which was often an extremely abundant one, was divided on the spot among those taking part as well as among the onlookers (though the latter received less, admittedly). In the north there was a similar custom for moulting geese, which were caught by tens of thousands.

The custom of mutual gifts (belekh) was also very archaic. The Yakut would visit a relative or friend, sometimes at a far-away spot, and receive a gift from his host, as though in gratitude for the visit; the gift would be a horse, saddle, a certain amount of meat, and so on, and in return, according to custom, he would invite the giver to visit him, although it might be a long time after, and present him with a gift of approximately the same value. These gifts were often timed to coincide with weddings, though they were sometimes presented independently.

The custom of hospitality was also observed. Hosts had to regale a guest visiting them, even though he might be a complete stranger, with the same food that they ate themselves. Since this custom clashed with the capitalist psychology, reared on commercial relationships, it was regarded in many cases as an inevitable evil which everyone tried to avoid in every way he could; this often resulted in comic episodes in which the hosts (more often than not wealthy people) hastily hid away the food they were about to eat when they saw a guest approaching, while the latter resorted to various tricks in order to find where the food was hidden. According to the old custom, the host was also obliged to invite relatives and neighbors whenever a beast was slaughtered and to offer them meat. Nonobservance of this custom gave rise to public censure.

Apart from these individual customs, the Yakut society admittedly retained the characteristic, half-conscious patriarchal ideology, which was clearly not a reflection of their true relationships, although it served the interests of the toyons, who knew how to make use of it. The toyons liked to style themselves the forefathers, heads and sponsors of their clans; they skillfully fomented various interclan quarrels (usually

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over land), thereby sustaining the fiction of community of clan interests. A poor kinsman used to call a toyon who had robbed him of his possessions aga (father), and was expected to look upon him as his "benefactor."

Family Customs

The primary unit in the social structure of the Yakuts had long been the family (kergen or yal), which consisted of husband, wife and children, sometimes with the inclusion of other relatives living in the same house. The married sons were usually regarded as a separate household. The family was monogamous, but not too long ago (at the beginning of the 19th century) polygamy also existed among the wealthier section of the population, although the number of wives did not usually exceed two or three. In such cases the wives lived apart, each one running a separate household; the Yakuts explained this custom as a convenient way of looking after the livestock, which were distributed among several wives.

Marriage was preceded, sometimes for a long interval, by matchmaking. There were also traces of exogamy (known from the 17th-century documents); until quite late, males tried to pick their wives from a different clan, while the richer people, not satisfied with this, sought their brides as far as possible in other naslegs or even other ulusy. Having selected the bride, the groom or his parents sent their relatives as matchmakers. The latter, using special ceremonies and conventional language, sought to obtain the consent of the future bride's parents to the marriage, and on the extent of the bride-price (khalyym, or suluu). The consent of the girl herself was not asked at all in the old days. The bride-price consisted of livestock, but the extent of it varied considerably, from one or two to many dozen head; the bride-price always included the meat of a slaughtered beast. At the end of the 19th century there was a strong trend towards taking the bride payment in actual money. Some of the payment (kurum) was spent on the wedding feast (in the 17th-century documents, the word kurum sometimes meant the bride payment as a whole). The payment was considered compulsory, and a girl who married without it considered herself dishonored. The suitor was assisted by relatives, sometimes even by distant kinsmen, in arranging the payment, thus showing the ancient view of a wedding as an all-clan affair. The relatives of the bride also took part in distributing the payment obtained. On his side, the suitor received a dowry (enn'e), partly in livestock and meat, but more often in clothing and utensils; the value of the dowry averaged half the value of the bride-price.

The clan also played an important part in the actual wedding ceremony, which was attended by a large number of guests, relatives of the bride and groom, neighbors and so on. The festivities lasted several days and consisted of extensive feasting, different rituals and amusements, games, dancing, and so on. Not only did the bride and groom refrain from occupying the central place in all this festivity, they hardly took part at all.

In similar fashion to the wedding ceremony, the kinship terminology has also retained traces of the earlier forms of marriage. The name for the son—uol—actually means boy or youth; the word for daughter—kyys—means girl or little girl; father is *aga* (literally, "older"); wife is oyokh, but in some places the wife is simply called d'akhtar (woman), emeekhsin ("old woman") and so on; the husband is er, the older brother is ubay (bii), the younger brother is ini; the elder sister is ed'iy (agas) and the younger sister is balys. The last four terms are also used to denote uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and other relatives. Generally speaking,

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was a ceremonial libation of kumys in honor of the deities, prayers to them, the ceremonial drinking of the kumys from very large wooden goblets (choroon). After this there was feasting, games of various kinds, wrestling and so on. The attendants of the benevolent deities, the so-called ayyy-oyuuna ("white shamans"), were the masters of ceremonies at the festivities, although they died out among the Yakuts a long time ago, on account of the decline of this cult. By the end of the 19th century, there remained only legends of the white shamans.

In the cult of both the benevolent and malevolent deities, a part was played at one stage by the military aristocracy—the toyons; they were usually the organizers. In their legendary genealogies the toyons often derived their names from the great and powerful deities.

The ancient ysyakh retained elements of the clan cult, and according to legend they had been organized according to clan in former times. The Yakuts retained other survivals of the clan cult, but these were not very clearly marked. For example, they retained elements of totemism, pointed out in the literature of the 18th century (Stralenberg). Each clan had at one time its own patron in the form of an animal; the clan totems were, for example, ravens, swans, falcons, eagles, squirrels, and so on. The members of a particular clan not only refrained from slaughtering their patrons and eating them as food, but also avoided mentioning them by name.

Associated with the clan cult was the worship of fire, which is still retained by the Yakuts. Fire, according to Yakut superstition, is the purest element and it was forbidden to defile or dishonor it. Before each meal was started, pieces of food were thrown into the fire; it was splashed with milk, kumys and so on. All this was considered a sacrifice to the master of the fire (Uot-ichchite). There was often not only a single master, but as many as seven brothers. No images were made of them. The cult of ancestors among the Yakuts was poorly developed. Among the deceased it was only the shamans and certain outstanding people whose memory was honored, and whose spirits, for some reason, were feared.

Folklore

The folklore of the Yakuts was somewhat one-sided, but in certain regions it reached a high artistic level. Apart from the wealth of varied and deeply poetic oral folklore, singing was far less developed and instrumental music hardly existed at all; dancing was fairly poorly developed and monotonous. In the realm of graphic art, the Yakuts only developed the applied forms—finishing and ornamentation of articles in everyday use.

A whole series of different genres and forms stand out among the oral creation of the Yakuts. One of the most interesting is the epic poem—the olonkho.

This is a very ancient type of folk poetry and originated in the clan-tribal age. The language of the olonkho is archaic, and contains a large number of obsolete, almost incomprehensible words and expressions, though it is at the same time rich, colorful and imaginative; the vocabulary of the epic contains almost twice as many words as the everyday language. Consequently, these works are difficult to translate into other languages. The olonkho describes the exploits of mythical warriors (bootur) and their struggles against the evil spirits, the abaasy. There are whole cycles of these poems built round the images

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THE DOLGANS

A. A. POPOV

General Information

101 The Dolgans comprise the basic population of the Taymyr National Okrug. At the present time the Dolgans speak a particular dialect of the Yakut language. They stem from groups of different origin. The nucleus of the Dolgans was made up of 4 clan groups of Tungusic origin—the Dolgans, Edzhens, Karyntuos and Dongots.

The Dolgans call themselves Dulgaan. This name, which is the name of one of the clan groups, was extended to cover all Dolgans in the 19th century, although, many of them still called themselves until recently by the name of the group to which they belonged. Hence they previously did not have any common name for themselves. In the Noril'sk region some Dolgans called themselves tya kisite (which means "man of the forest" in Yakut) or tege (meaning "tribe" or "people" in Evenk). The Dolgans sometimes used the name Tungus but distinguished themselves from the local Evenks in the Taymyr and the Evenk National Okrugs. They do not consider themselves Yakuts and are ethnologically distinct from the latter.

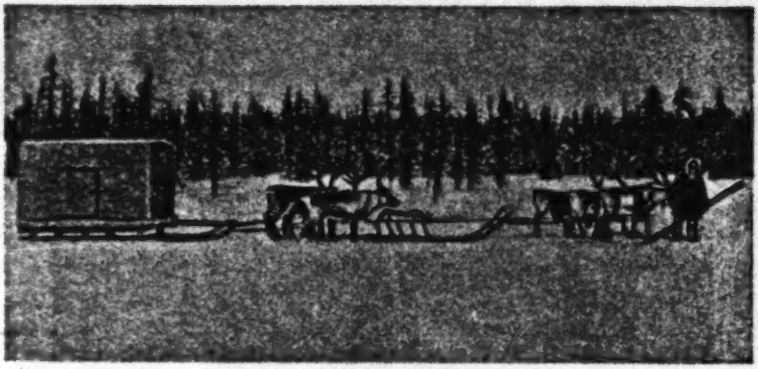
(161) The number of Dolgans was 1224 in 1897, and 1445 in 1926–27. From the beginning of the 20th century, in addition to the "true" Dolgans, this nationality also included other Yakutized groups (so-called tundra peasants and local Evenks) as well as some of the Yakuts living in the same region. In actual fact the entire indigenous population of the Avamskiy and Khatangskiy Rayons, with the exception of the Nganasans and the Evenks living south of the Kheta River and its sources, and the entire indigenous population of the Noril'sk-Pyasina Rural Soviet of the Dudinskiy Rayon in the Taymyr National Okrug can be considered Dolgans. Small groups of Dolgans also live on the Yenisey in the Dudinskiy and Ust'-Yeniseyskiy Rayons.

●614 Before the Revolution the Dolgans formed the following administrative "clans" headed by clan elders or "princelings:" Dolgan-Yenisey (Dolgan proper), Dolgan-Tungus (Dongot), Zhigan-Tungus (Edzhen) and Boganid-Tungus (Karyntuo). The Yakuts who merged with the Dolgans formed the Lower Tundra "Clan" Administration, and to some extent became part of the Betu (Chordu) and other naslegs.

197 The Dolgan language is a dialect of Yakut and contains Evenk words. The closeness of the Dolgan dialect to the Yakut language decreases as we move from east to west.

175 According to Russian sources, in the 17th century the territory settled by the present-day Dolgans was occupied by ancestors of the Nganasans.
101 The above-mentioned groups, which later formed the core of the Dolgan people, lived at that time in regions comparatively far removed from the Taymyr: the Dolgan group occupied regions near the mouth of the Vilyuy

55:Popov E-5 (no date) 1964 RV2 Yakut RV2
Dolgan



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Winter dwelling, sled tent.

There are more than a dozen versions of the Dolgan national costume, all with their special names, though only different in a few trivial details. The characteristic feature of both men's and women's clothing is a slightly elongated coattail at the back. The Dolgans themselves explain this by the fact that when sitting down on the cold ground in a tent they can spread out the long coattail underneath them. 291

Even before the Revolution household clothing for men and women was made of bought material. Men wore shirts and trousers of the Russian style, and women wore dresses, on top of which they put on aprons without openings. Both the men's shirts and the women's aprons almost always had side pockets and were embroidered with narrow colored piping and numerous buttons. They did not wear any underclothing. 291 177

In the summer and winter men and women wore a cloth coat called the sontap. In the winter they wore a second fox-fur or hareskin coat beneath it. In the winter instead of the cloth coats they sometimes wore the deerskin open dokha (parka) or short coat, and ventless fur clothing with a hood with the fur outside, i.e., the sokuy. When traveling the men wore a sokuy over their cloth coat or deerskin parka. In rainy summer weather a cloth sokuy was put on. In the winter the women wore a son or long polar-fox or hareskin coat, on top of which they had a sontap or sangyyak (deerskin coat). Men and women girdled their clothing with bead-studded belts. The mukalkaan, a bead-embroidered men's parka, was close to the Even type. The old-fashioned men's and women's aprons were also similar to the Even type. Men's and women's hats (bergese) were shaped like hoods. The top was cut from fox feet or from cloth, and was embroidered with beads or finished with narrow bands of colored cloth. Winter footwear was made of deer feet and came in two types: a type reaching to the knee or higher, corresponding to the Evenk boot and often ornamented with beads. 291 [531]

Summer footwear was made of suede. A hole was made in the middle of the sole in summer footwear so that any water leaking inside during walking could run out.

Social Relations and Religion

By the time the Russians arrived, the Dolgans were splitting up into clans. Kinship was reckoned on the male side. There were certain traces 614 611

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Men's snow goggles.

There were certain traces
of matriarchy still to be found. For example, in the old times several Dolgan families living in one dwelling would elect a communal housewife, to whom all the men were subordinate. Until quite recently, maternal kinship was considered closer than paternal kinship among the Dolgans. The women kept the fire going and "fed it," and also supervised the family sacred relics. Clan organization among the Dolgans fell into abeyance in the 19th century.

The development of trade and the introduction of improved techniques into the principal occupation of the Dolgans, that is to say hunting, led to the acquisition of furs on a personal level. Furs had long been an item of trade. Their commercial importance had an effect on the relations among the Dolgans in the field of distribution. Products from reindeer-hunting or fishing had to be divided among relatives and neighbors, while furs (polar-fox or sable) were considered the absolute property of the hunter and were left untouched. An important factor in the social differentiation of the Dolgans was the concentration of the bulk of the reindeer herds, which were not particularly numerous as a whole, in the hands of a small group of rich households. This became a basis for different forms of exploitation: such as the loaning of reindeer to poor people who then became dependent on the richer reindeer-breeders, the hiring of herdsmen, mainly orphans or poor relatives, and so on. Nomadic groups were often formed through the congregation of poorer households around a richer reindeer-breeder, who made use of his neighbors' labor for pasturing and watching the herd. In the second half of the 19th century petty Russian commercial travelers appeared among the Dolgans, together with Yakut merchants who exploited their kinsmen.

Nevertheless, the economic production and distribution among the Dolgans retained numerous traces of the original communal relationships. This includes the above-mentioned collective forms of hunting (cuttings, spearings), joint fowling, fishing and so forth. Although the means of production for hunting and fishing had long since become private property, the booty

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